

FEDARCINE – Cooperation of International Archaeology Film Festivals

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To research and save the cultural heritage of humankind is the main duty of archaeology as well the protection of historic monuments. To spread this knowledge and to make it accessible to people of different nations is the aim of those festivals which deal with films about archaeology. Let me give you a short review of the situation we had up to when festivals about archaeology began.

Since the beginning of archaeology in the 18th century various media especially drawings, paintings, printed graphics and copies from objects found, were used for documentation, publication and popularization. Indeed, drawing of archaeological excavations is still used up to present time. They offer the possibility to be true to scale, to show all important details and to be very exact. In the middle of 19th century photographs of archaeological sites came into use. But most of

them were only an attraction of fun-fairs in a panorama show, sometimes in the popular 3D-technique. On some more academic photos we can see a meter rule to show the real size of an object. These pictures do not contain all of the possibilities that a technically detailed drawing can offer but they possess other qualities we have to admire today: they show us the passing of time since the moment the pictures were taken. The opening of the Suez-Canal gave the opportunity to present a gallery of pictures showing the testimony of ancient Egypt –nowadays we can observe a change of these objects and their surrounding.

The photos of Theobald Maler showing Maya temples from the last quarter of 19th century are also a unique treasure of documentation.

The first moving pictures of archaeological sites or finds were only short cuts –pictures

taken as a memory of exotic locations and treasures. Cinema was not the main medium for scientific documentation in the early times of cinematography. The Pathé News took short cuts of picturesque, exotic locations but not especially of scientific topics.

Even the moving pictures of Agatha Christie about the excavations of her husband Max Mallowan in Tell Brak in Syria 1937 were not able to reach a wide public.

In the 20's we can find a lot of titles with archaeological and historical topics like *The Nibelungen*, *Ben Hur* or *Natur und Liebe* and some pictures of the excavation of the Wasserburg Buchau. Some fictional films with historical background were produced with political aims in Italy and Germany, and in the 30's the medium was instrumentalized for ideological and political purposes¹ like the documentaries *We are wandering with the East-Germans* or *Germans against Pharaohs*. In the 20's the German UFA began in cooperation with the department of cultural film to produce scientific films like *Pfahlbauten in Unteruhldingen* ("Lake dwellings in Unteruhldingen").

The 60's are the beginning of a great number of films about archaeology. There are some TV-series in United Kingdom and the USA (It's about time, 66/67). The UNESCO and the British University Council were also producing movies of that kind. All of us saw at least some of them on television or at school –and we were not amused, like Thomas Frickel, the director of AG-Dok in Germany wrote in the *Cinarchea-Catalogue* 1998, p.8f.:

"For film was only the continuation of dusty paedagogics with other means. Thank God, this has changed. The initiators of the archaeological film festivals are aware of the responsibility towards the scientific film. As a consequence they are seeking a compromise between the necessary scientific instruction and the artistic form. They have understood that the scientific film is no longer the marginal outsider –it is a film and should look like a film: sensual and dramatically stringent it should convey its contents visually and not only verbally. And it should also –yes, damn it and in fact why not- be witty."

In the 80's the number

increased –and they mark the beginning / inauguration of Archaeological film festivals. Nevertheless most of the films were –from cinematographic point of view– boring.

In these films, the archaeology part amounted to ‘armchair’ statements by archaeologists, museum directors and other experts, in front of their bookcases or on location and particularly annoying: I was unable to actually see what they were talking about. When I did see it on screen or on TV, the voice over was already talking about something completely different –the so called sound on vision cut used by the media in the early seventies, to indicate why this structure left minimal information in memory.

Only on rare occasions did the excavation environment leave the idea of an organized system or plan. Whenever spectacular objects (of course they all were!) were brought out it mostly happened in a twinkling and the finds were so clean that at most, they had a bit of dust brushed or blown off them, which would seem to make the museum conservator redundant. Dating would follow on the spur of the moment, with soothsayer certainty, live in front of the camera, or there would be a lot

of talking about ‘the complicated procedures to be used in this case’, ‘specially developed methods’, ‘computer assisted dating techniques’, ‘professional handling’ or ‘strenuous processes’.

I never arrived at finding out just what was the knack of their professional handling, because in this very moment our expert would turn his back on the camera or place, his hand right in front of the macro shot, covering the little drill behind it. At the computer there was only the stern gaze of the operator into the camera, or his nimble fingers flying across the keyboard; the screen image was only shown on rare occasions, and then always in sequences too short.

Expert knowledge remained arcane, due to its technical terms, and in these short documentaries the protracted work process was merely indicated by the proffered expostulations. In the films themselves, with their adept editing, everything happened at a pace that would never persuade the observer that a considerable amount of stamina was needed to achieve scientific results.

Excavations, mostly emergency

ones done on construction sites for multistorey car parks, department stores, insurance companies or other major buildings, right in the middle of the frenetic crowds of city-life, usually left you with the impression that they were accompanied by the city orchestra. For excavations in the rural landscape they would use the Pastoral Symphony or Debussy, for centennials world famed philharmonic orchestras; as for topics associated with the Middle Ages you'd be damned if they weren't foreshadowed by a lyre, a harp or sometimes a spinet. Synthesizers were usually used for underwater shooting.

However, this noble music did not serve to ennoble the efforts of archaeologists, excavation technicians or students in action. It was merely used to make them bearable for the spectator. As it seemed, filmmakers and television editors presumed the work they were presenting to be so tedious that it needed support from additional sound sources. This revealed an arrogant misconception: scientific action was presumed to be drab or uninteresting, anyhow non cinematic, and the spectator was assumed to be disinterested in learning about such matters,

or just plainly overstretched. And indeed he is by frequent sound on vision cuts, distracting music, precious wordings, lively edits, quick camera pans, beauty shots, but lacking in information. The voice-over of the narrator (in those days, and with such films, they were seldom female) would often aggravate the aversion, with their noncommittal, professional, cool or benevolently superior tone.

Whenever graphics were included, to support understanding they bore an unpleasant likeness of those used in the UFA culture films of the Nazi - era, or they would be bristling with so much redundant information that you had to close your eyes, mentally speaking. Certainly, animated graphics are strong tools in this media. In contrast to graphic presentations in museums which can merely show a given *status quo*, the film media can use animations to provide an instant understanding of developments and thus make it with far less words. Not long ago developing such trick drawings was a pretty expensive procedure, which in recent years has been replaced by less complicated conversion techniques. Nowadays, whenever graphics are needed, you can make use of computer

access to make them appear, in front of the spectator in a matter of seconds.

However the generated visible images rarely match the presented contextual development. Quite often you are left with the impression that it is merely a matter of demonstrating the capacity of the electronic gadgets, instead of producing an adequate graphical solution showing a multifaceted procedure which would otherwise be difficult to illustrate.

The newest state of the art option by which computing techniques are utilized to simulate spatial presentations of perished houses, temple systems, even entire cities, and let them come alive in the pictures, and accessible – is fascinating. Nevertheless, the optical impression left by the permanent glossy look and the (so far) too seamless presentation makes me, as a filmmaker, shrink back from utilizing it and prefer to have this sort of pictures produced the ordinary way. Somehow this seems to be more in the vein of archaeology.

The archaeological film is not merely a multiplier for archaeological research results. It illustrates the often arduous

paths to gain insights into these scientific disciplines and shows that archaeology also has its tactical, technical aspects. The film and the festivals for the archaeological film are in the field of archaeology a link between science, education, museum, film production and the public. Each of our festivals has its own profile. All of them have established a forum which unites archaeologists and filmmakers, historians and physicians, museum directors, editors and students, interested lay persons and journalists from all over Europe and abroad.

The accompanying symposium, which is dedicated to new media in archaeology or special tendencies of film-making, gives CINARCHEA a special profile among the other European archaeological film festivals. The other festivals are supported by journals, museums, or departments of cultural affairs and can offer rich expositions and exciting excursions nearby, the German festival in Kiel has its origin in the Christian-Albrechts-University of Kiel. The Rector of the Kiel University said in a greeting to the festival 98:

"The university draws its life from the intramural cooperation of its various academic disciplines. The

modern possibilities of extramural communication require academic cooperation across great geographical distances."

Universities need however to open themselves up to the non-academic world (culture, economics, politics) in order to impress on their interested public the results of academic work. In doing so, the universities not only awaken public understanding but also receive important stimuli for their own work.

One way to inform the general public of the results of academic work is provided by the medium of film.

The festival years document astonishing technical and creative achievements: in 1994 we were still projecting films on celluloid meant for cinema projection in a uniform 16mm format, but soon we were forced to accept contributions from all over the world in various video formats and systems and then pay a lot of money to transfer them. This variety of formats has somewhat given way to fewer and qualitatively superior systems, it is true, but the chance of producing broadcastable material with favourably priced equipment means that

there are still many forms of projection to be considered –and this development is unstoppable.

Our programme offered some hundred productions from more than 30 countries, which were partially presented by the authors and producers. They were astonished at the preponderantly new experience of seeing their films, meant as they were for the small screen and private consumption, projected publicly on the big screen with an audience present. The spectrum of subjects has hardly changed, only the films on experimental archaeology, which at first came as shorts from Germany and France above all, have temporarily made place for BBC big-budget productions. At the moment there is hardly one title in this category on offer. Big-budget productions costing millions are predominant on the whole; for this reason it is intriguing to take a close look at smaller forms and programme series. The last decade has seen the rise of digitally produced images, which offered exactly the possibilities that the archaeology film had been waiting for. If the technological achievement evinced by these images was at first astonishing, the endless repetition of technical means soon became

irritating. Both their appearance and their use were therefore greeted with critical reservations in the Cinarchea-Symposium as early as 1996, which were published in the volume *Archäologie und neue Medien* (Archaeology and new media) in 1998. In the meantime technically superior programmes are available and techniques have been found that may effectively be integrated into the film and rightly excite attention.

A newcomer among the means of reviving the past and entertaining the viewer are the re-enactment scenes, of which there is an abundance. As part of our permanent media critique the function of the latter has been examined in this year's symposium of Cinarchea 2004. The scholarly papers were integrated in the programme and offer young scholars in particular a suitable platform for their research; at the same time the bilingual publication promotes greater publicity, cf. the volume *Finds, Films, False Friends – the archaeology film between profit and propaganda*, Kiel 2003. Whether this year's papers on the subject of *The moor-corpse in contre-jour lighting – big emotions in the archaeology film* will be able to appear bound as a book is however extremely doubtful for

financial reasons.

The Archaeological film festivals

Archaeological film festivals have their native homes in Romance countries. The *Comité européen du film archéologique* was founded in 1985 by organizers of the three existing festivals in Brussels, Paris and Verona. The committee was under obligation to the Cultural Commission of the European Council to determine the policy of the festivals as well as to promote the production and distribution of archaeological films. Bordeaux joined in 1988 and Amiens in 1989. The characteristic features of all these festivals have always been an international jury consisting of experts and film-makers to judge the films chosen by a selection jury and to award an audience prize in addition to the (mostly) non-endowed prizes.

In 1980, Pierre Cattelain founded in Brussels, the Festival du Film d'Art et d'Archéologie de Bruxelles, which took place four times up to 1988 and after a break of 7 years was revived under the name of KINEON by Didier Dehon, with the combination of Art and Archaeology. Since November 1997, it was organized every

two years as a pure Festival international du Film archéologique de Bruxelles. Its particular characteristics are short academic presentations and debates by well known archaeologists like Yves Coppens. The films are presented with French voice-overs and the catalogue appears in French.

In Paris, Louis Girard organized the Festival international du Film archéologique, ARCHEA, which took place for the third and last time from November 13 to 15, 1989, in the Grand Palais attended by a large audience. The award was handed over 1987 in La Villette by Jean-Jaques Annaud who at that time became famous for his film "L'Histoire de Feu".

In Verona, the Rassegna Internazionale di Cinematografia Archeologica was organized by Alberto Siliotti and took place from June 10 to 16, 1985, and again in June 1986; from September 1 to 5, 1986, in Fiesole near Florence. It became the festival of the prize winners of the previous festivals within the framework of the 41st Estate Fiesolana.

The largest event of this kind is ICRONOS in Bordeaux which premiered from October 24 to

30, 1988. Since then it has dealt with an important theme every two years, usually one particular country (1995: Greece, 1997 Turkey). It lasts one week and simultaneously presents numerous exhibitions relating to the chosen subject. The wide ranging programme also contains popular films and films orientated towards tourists. The prize Archéologia - Andrée Faton is endowed with 20,000 Philippe Dorthé is the head and president of AFIFA, the Association du Festival du Film Archéologique. Today ICRONOS is organized by Laetitia Dion. All the films are screened with French voice-overs and the catalogue appears in French.

The Festival du Film d'archéologie in Amiens was founded by Tahar Ben Redjeb in 1989 and took place for the first time from January 24 to 27, 1990. Since then, it has taken place every two years at the end of January with a huge public response. The catalogue appears in a French version.

In Rovereto, in northern Italy, the Rassegna Internazionale del Cinema Archeologico took place for the first time in April, 1990. Every year the festival is dedicated to one particular theme, every two years it stages a competition for the coveted

Premio Paolo Orsi (endowed with 10M Lire). It is organized by the *Museo Civico di Rovereto* and the Rovereto's office of culture and substantially supported by the magazine *Archeologia Viva*. The director of the organization is Dario di Blasi. Since 2003 it takes place at the new Museo Contemporaneo and offers discussions between the screenings. The catalogue appears in Italian.

The Rassegna Internazionale del Film archeologico in Forlì, Italy was first organized by Roberto Panza and Carla Rosetti and took place as the ARCHEOFILMFEST from September 10 to 15, 1996, for the sixth and probably last time within the framework of the International Congress for Prehistoric and Ancient History, UISPP. The films are shown with Italian voice-overs.

A unique event are the screenings at the Musée Royal de Mariemont in Belgium. In irregular intervals Frédéric André invites authors and producers to a one or two days lasting festival which deals with a particular topic.

The first International Archaeological Film Festival in Germany took place in Kiel from April 20 to 23, 1994 under the

name of CINARCHEA. It was organized by the *Arbeitsgruppe Film* of the Christian Albrechts University in Kiel, with varying partners, and is accompanied by a symposium. The competition programme covers productions from the last four years, there is also a retrospective section with prize winners from previous festivals and films from the early days of cinematography. All the films are screened in their original version or with English or German subtitles. From 1994 to 2000 each festival had a little trailer showing in animation some adventures of the CINARCHEA-Emblem, the little neolithical cameraman. The catalogue appears bilingual in German and English, two books with the lectures of the symposium are available in German and English. Since 1996 there is an exposition with connection to the main subject.

AGON, the biannual International Meeting of Archaeological Film of the Mediterranean Area is organized by the magazine *Archaiologia & Technes* and the Ministry of Culture of Greece under the direction of Anna Lambraki Simirioti. The second meeting took place in Rethymno-Crete, the next ones in Athens. All the films are screened with Greek language and the catalogue

appears in a multilingual Greek, English and French version.

The first festival of its kind in Spain took place in November 1998 in Santander, organized by Alejandro Trinchant. He amplified the main topic to film of cultural heritage and collected many films about architecture in the 2nd festival in Alcala.

The first Festival international du film archeologique de Nyon, near Geneva at Lac Léman was organized by Christophe Goumand in cooperation with the Musée Romain Nyon. The films are projected with French voice-over commentaries, the catalogue appears in French.

In 2003 the European Festivals of Archaeological Films have been associated creating a common European network. The knowledge of the cultural heritage and history is an important base for the development of a common European culture. Discovering and preserving our cultural heritage and protection of historic monuments is the task of archaeology, the aim of films being presented at the festivals is the spreading of that knowledge to people of different nations getting more familiar with former civilizations.



AGON

International Meeting of
Archaeological Film of the
Mediterranean Area
Thessaloniki, Greece,
November, 07 - 14, 2004.
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Archéologie(s) et Film(s) (Musée de Mariemont)

Mariemont, Belgium, several
dates in 2004.
Contact: Frédéric André
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Mariemont
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CINARCHEA

6. International Archaeology-
Film-Art-Festival
Kiel, Germany, April 26 - 29,
2006

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**Festival du Film
d'Archéologie d'Amiens**
Amiens, France, April 2 - 5,

2003
Contact: Tahar Ben Redjeb
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Festival international de films d'archéologie de Nyon

Nyon, Switzerland, March 15 -
20, 2005

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m](mailto:Christophe.Goumand@oracle.com)
Website:
www.mrn.ch/FFA/index.htm
Address: Musée Romain
Place du Château 5
CH - 1260 Nyon 1



ICRONOS
Festival International du Film

Archéologique de Bordeaux
Bordeaux, France, October 25 –
30, 2004

Contact: Laetitia Dion / Philippe
Dorthe

Fon: ++ 33 (5) 56 94 22 20

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KINEON

Festival International du Film
Archéologique de Bruxelles
Brussels, Belgium, November,
14 - 16, 2003

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Rassegna Internazionale del Cinema Archeologico di Rovereto

Rovereto, Italy, October 05-09,
2004

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Rassegna Internazionale del
Cinema Archeologico c/o Museo
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I-38068 Rovereto

Notes

1. K. DENZER (2003) *Finds, films, false friends – The archaeological Film in the Service of Profit and Propaganda*, Verlag Ludwig, Kiel.